

THOMAS TRIBUNE

Fall 2016 Edition



Tim & Sherry Thomas

DISCIPLE-MAKING

Do you have any words or phrases that you use exclusively within your family? Something that if an outsider heard you say it not only would they not understand what you said, but would probably look at you like you were from another planet.

For our family we have, "itswhatyougetfor" I am not sure which child said it first but it has become something we all use. In a general sense, it means that you just reaped, what you sowed. A more normal family might say something like, "Are you OK?" or "Do we need to call 911?" But no one (not even us) has ever described the Thomas family as 'normal'.

We have those kinds of words in the church as well. Words like sanctified and glorified, and the multipurpose word, fellowship. We know what we mean when we say them but perhaps no one else does. Often when we say "follower", we mean "disciple". I'm OK with that and am not trying to suggest that we should stop saying "follower". For the sake of this article, I want to compare "follower" (in its most basic definition) with "disciple".

Over 25 times the Gospels tell us that there were crowds of people who followed Jesus as he traveled from town to town. Many of the people followed not just from town A to town B, but from town to town, to town to the point of exhaustion and near starvation.

I am sure their reasons were varied. Some probably just wanted to be part of the latest thing. Perhaps some were curious about what might happen next.

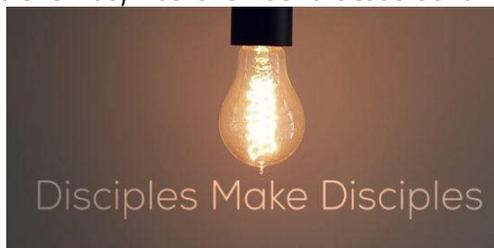
These are the people who watch NASCAR for the crashes. I believe many of Christ's followers were sincere. They followed because they genuinely wanted to learn more about His teaching and in the evening would break into small groups and discuss and debate what they heard that day. But at the end of the day there were still just followers.

The disciples (not just the 12) were different. Their involvement was more than an interested bystander. They were not just followers, they served and were sent. Jesus sent his disciples (Luke 10) in advance to do ministry in the towns He planned to visit, they healed many along the way. Then before the ascension, he sent them again, with the commandment to make more disciples (Matthew 28), We called this the Great Commission.

My fear is that in too many situations we have become dependent on a program to make a disciple for us. But no program, not even Awana, will make a disciple. We do our best to help students complete their handbooks and move them along to the next age-group and in the end, we hope a disciple will pop out. Here's the problem. It is not God's plan for programs to make disciples. Jesus made it quite clear, He intends for His disciples to make disciples.

In his recent book, *Relational Children's Ministry*, Dan Lovaglia describes what he calls the "Not-So-Great" Commission this way: *Go... and go... and go. Make programs. Administrate all things. Don't lose any kids.* Does this sound like your ministry? I hope not.

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Save the Date

Courageous Grandparenting

February 17&18, 2017

Faith Community Church
Ft. Atkinson

Featuring:
Cavin Harper



Founder of Christian Grandparenting Network

Intentional Christian Grandparenting

www.awanaswi.org

Family News

This year, there were two additions to the Thomas family. Kelsey Claire was born here in Wisconsin on September 28 to Kyle & Lenie and Lillian Rebecca came November 7 to David & Sarah in Florida.



This brings our grandchild count up to eight. The pattern remains the same. Our daughter has sons (2) while our sons each have 2 daughters (6).



This fall, we travelled to Colorado for Evan's 8th birthday and to watch some of the World Series with Wendy and her family.

We had thirteen at our house for Thanksgiving this year. Stephen, Joanna, and their two daughters came over from Michigan; Kyle, Lenie and their two; Tim's sister Beth, and her husband Ken, and their granddaughter Jaelyn, came up from the Chicago area. It was nice to have a full house for the day.

During our Christmas break, we will be driving down to central Florida to meet Lillian. On the way, we will be stopping to pick up Sherry's mom, Viola, in Huntsville, AL.

Please visit us at our website www.awanaswi.org

Disciple-making From page 1

Awana, like all ministry resources, are tools to help us: us, as in – people, fulfilling our calling as disciple-makers.

Disciple-making requires more than just moving students along the curriculum path; it requires personal involvement. It requires a relationship.

It is my prayer that all of us will get excited, not about new curriculum, but about building life-changing relationships with the young people God brings our way and to seeing the next generation come to know, love, and serve the Lord.

Ministry Updates

Many of you are familiar with Trek and Journey and how they relate to Awana. But these two words can also sum up our ministry over the last several months.

In July, 32 churches, mostly in northeastern Wisconsin, were added to our territory and we have spent a significant amount of time traveling to cities like Green Bay, Appleton, Neenah, Sheboygan, Chilton, Waupaca, Wautoma, and Waupun, just to name a few.

One of these churches, near Bowler, WI, is Stockbridge Bible Church. SBC is a mission work on the Stockbridge-Munsee Indian Reservation. The reservation serves over 750 members of the Mohican Tribe. Also part of our territory is Appleton Alliance. On a typical Tuesday night they have about 800 children in their club.

During these treks we have met many dedicated Awana leaders, children's ministry directors, and pastors, connecting with 28 of our new 32 churches. It is a privilege to be serving these churches. We hope to complete as much travel as possible in the northern parts of the state before weather becomes an issue.

There have also seen longer journeys this year. The first one was a 3000 mile round-trip drive to northern Alberta, Canada for Awana Prairies Camp. Most recently, we traveled to Dallas, TX to attend the Legacy Grandparenting Summit. Thankfully, we were able to fly to this one.

During the Summit, we were both encouraged and challenged to be intentional about passing on faith to multiple generations. As a result, we are co-hosting a grandparenting event in Wisconsin this coming February, featuring the founder of the Christian Grandparenting Network, Cavin Harper. See website for more information.

Previous issues of the Thomas Tribune and other news are available from our website: awanaswi.org/newsletters.html

Tim & Sherry Thomas are missionaries with Awana serving in Wisconsin. Their sending Church is the Deltona Alliance Church of Deltona, Florida.

None of this would be possible without prayer and financial partners. Would you please pledge to pray for us during 2017? If so, please let us know by sending us a card, letter, or email. Would you also prayerfully consider becoming a financial partner by pledging a monthly or quarterly gift of any amount to help us stay on the field? If so, please visit the support page of our website or contact us for more information.

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